Global warming is too real to ignore

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Body

Re: "Global warming theory faces the big chill," July 14.

In an otherwise interesting op-ed, I'm afraid Tim Ball has thrown the climate change baby out with the global warming bath water.

There is nothing new or controversial about the existence of regional warming in the Middle Ages and the later Little Ice Age before more current temperatures were normalized.
For The Calgary Herald

All geologists would agree that following the end of multiple stages of vast expanses of glaciation and cold weather during the Pleistocene epoch, the Earth entered an interglacial environment known as the Recent in the geological time scale.

This natural warming period began about a million years ago and must have experienced numerous minor warm and cold fluctuations, some of which occurred only centuries ago as part of an overall trend of post-glacial time.

Although we can only speculate, it is reasonable to assume that warming in the Middle Ages and the following Little Ice Age, which were by no means global, were the last gasps of the post-Pleistocene glacial and interglacial stages best documented in Europe.

Ball attributes these changes to a global scale, which is simply not the case.

Ball's own evidence in the form of a temperature-time graph shows significant increases in global temperature at its highest in over 500 years, but the issue isn't precisely how much that change is.

The fact is global temperatures have continued to rise over a sustained period, namely since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, with no signs of stabilizing.

It is also interesting to note the Ball graph ends without data from the past 25 years or so. This is a glaring omission requiring an explanation.

The bottom line is whether global warming is a real phenomenon. Of course, in a geological sense, global warming exists -- it always has and always will. The real questions are: Does it occur slowly, in a human time scale? Is it caused by human activity? Does it do irreversible damage to life on Earth? Does it occur at rates unprecedented by natural processes? And is there anything we can do about it?

There is no question that C02, methane and other greenhouse gases are increasing now at a rate greater than in the past 140,000 years, most likely as a result of population growth and other human activity.

Global warming is too real to ignore

Are greenhouse gases the only contributors to global warming? There are those who believe global warming is caused solely by natural phenomena, such as variations in solar radiation. Those who propose this theory have had their day in the court of world opinion and, if correct, there would be nothing for any of us to do to stop such a process.

Those who believe this would let the greenhouse gases roll unabated, crying full steam ahead like the Titanic, oblivious to the dangers.

I choose to follow the lead of Lord John Browne, chairman of British Petroleum, who is of the opinion in the current issue of Foreign Affairs that global warming is real and is already doing significant damage. His company is setting an example to others in the oilpatch by becoming more energy-efficient at no cost to BP, by reducing CO2 and other greenhouse gases and investing in alternate energy sources. His message is one of hope for the future.

J. R. Century is a retired geologist from Calgary.

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